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ABSTRACT

The four Special Emphasis Elementary Schools in the Corpus Christi Independent School District have markedly increased students' achievement, particularly in reading and language arts. This study was conducted to determine the perceived impact of the Special Emphasis (SE) components and to aid in the implementation of future SE schools. The evaluation team interviewed all teachers and staff in the four schools as well as a sample of parents. Results of the interviews indicated that the quality of the staff and the highly structured nature of the reading program are perceived as critical to the schools' success. Together these factors created a positive school atmosphere in which teachers and staff communicated their high expectations to pupils, worked well together to coordinate the learning experience and meet pupils' needs, and showed concern for pupils' interests. This, coupled with administrative leadership and the assistance of support personnel, created a situation which motivated students to behave in a manner conducive to learning. The report's main sections cover: (1) study method; (2) data sources; (3) results; and (4) conclusions. A list of references is provided and appendices contain the interview questions and responses. (PS)

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Summary

As part of a court approved consent decree, the Corpus Christi Independent School District has implemented four Special Emphasis Elementary Schools with unique components designed for effective instruction. Since the implementation of these special programs, which range from one to three years in duration, the students' achievement scores have notably increased. This study was conducted to determine the perceived impact of the Special Emphasis components on student achievement and to aid in the implementation of future Special Emphasis schools.

The evaluation team interviewed all the teachers and staff in the four Special Emphasis schools, as well as a small sample of parents. The information gathered from these interviews indicated strong, consistent trends and patterns in the behaviors, feelings, and phenomena occurring across all four schools.

Specifically, as a result of the implementation of the Special Emphasis components, these schools are marked by a very positive atmosphere, filled with high expectations for student learning and achievement. The Teachers and staff are described as highly dedicated professionals who work long hours and show a great deal of personal concern for the students. The teachers and staff clearly work together very well in a team effort toward common goals, planning on a

daily basis to coordinate the students' learning experiences and insure that all students' needs are met. Teachers pay close attention to monitoring students' progress, individualizing according to students' instructional needs, and keeping the students on task. Principals and assistant principals provide strong instructional leadership and administrative support. The additional staff specialists provide expertise in special areas, and coupled with the additional support personnel, allow a great deal of flexibility in grouping practices. The students are highly motivated to achieve, are proud of their school, and demonstrate behaviors conducive to improved reading abilities. The parents volunteer their help to the school and feel welcome and comfortable there.

These observations of the school environment and participant behaviors demonstrate that these four schools have indeed been transformed into effective schools. However, it is not possible from the information available to attribute these success indices to any particular Special Emphasis components. The interview data strongly indicate that the quality of the staff and the highly structured nature of the reading program are perceived as critical components to the success of the schools. However, all the components are too interrelated to separate some as more important than others. Furthermore, the overall description of the schools indicate that an energy has been created that

far exceeds the sum of the parts.

It is suggested that future Special Emphasis schools be implemented using a planned variation strategy. In other words, different subsets of the components in combination could be explored in an attempt to find the most cost-effective program. The outcomes described in this study could be used as the determinant of success for the alternative models in the new schools. In this way, the limited resources available could be utilized to optimally spread quality instruction to as many minority and poverty-level students as possible.

Introduction

As part of a Court approved consent decree, Corpus Christi Independent School District has established four Special Emphasis Elementary Schools. The first, Lozano Elementary, was started in 1982-83; Shaw Elementary was started in 1983-84; and both Coles Elementary and Zavala Elementary began as Special Emphasis Schools in 1984-85.

The Special Emphasis concept is characterized by a set of unique school and instructional components designed to produce effective instruction that will significantly improve student achievement. Since the inception of the Special Emphasis schools, student achievement scores have increased remarkably. (These data are available from the Office of Program Evaluation of Corpus Christi I.S.D.) The purpose of this study was to ascertain from the participants the perceived impact of the unique components of the Special Emphasis Program on student achievement. Specifically, two objectives were targeted:

1) to gather as much information as possible to assist in the effective implementation of future Special Emphasis Schools, and

2) to determine, if possible, which components have been contributing to the increases in achievement and which may be unnecessary to continue.

From written information provided, as well as meetings with district staff, the evaluator identified the following ten components as unique to the Special Emphasis Schools:

1) special selection of teachers and staff,
2) additional salary increments for all staff,
3) lower pupil-teacher ratio,
4) highly structured reading/language arts program,
5) intensive inservice training program,
6) additional staff specialists and support personnel,
7) additional supplies and materials,
8) additional clerical assistance,
9) additional released time for in-district professional growth, and
10) parent involvement program.

With these components in mind, the evaluation team interviewed all teachers and staff in the four Special Emphasis Schools, as well as a sample of parents. The interviews were designed to gather as much information as possible regarding what phenomena have been occurring in these schools as a result of the implementation of the unique components. The evaluation was not designed to highlight or explain differences among the four schools, except those that might be a function of the length of implementation. Rather, the goal was to detect trends and patterns across all schools in order to meet the objectives of the study. Armed with such information, decision-makers could then extend the success of the Special Emphasis program to as many students as possible.

Method

Since the goal of the study was to determine the perceived impact of the Special Emphasis components on student achievement, an interview approach was selected. The first step in the development of the interview device was a meeting between the evaluator and the district staff who were instrumental in the original conception of the Special Emphasis components. From this meeting, the evaluator learned the background information regarding the development of the Special Emphasis Schools and other pertinent details regarding the various components of the program.

Following this meeting, the evaluator interviewed the four principals of the current Special Emphasis Schools, both in a group and individually. The group session was designed to inform the principals about the purpose of the study and to arrange the details and schedules of the interview process in each of the schools. The individual principal interviews lasted about 30 minutes each and were entirely open-ended. The purpose of these interviews was not only to obtain the principals' perceptions of the factors contributing to the success of their schools, but also to help the evaluator develop the questions for the school staff and parent interviews.

Using the information from these meetings, the evaluator developed two questionnaires: one for school staff members and one for parents. The school staff questionnaire, which may be found in Appendix A, was designed for all staff, although some questions were asked only of the teachers. The questions were framed to produce information about the operation of the schools and the participants' perceptions of the significant factors contributing to success, particularly with regard to the Special Emphasis components. A copy of the parent questionnaire may be found in Appendix B. These questions were designed to detect both the parents' perceptions of the school (in comparison to other schools and in comparison to these schools prior to implementation of the special program) and the parents' perceptions of changes in their children's attitudes and habits. Both questionnaires started with general open-ended questions and then proceeded to focus on particular aspects of the program. The questionnaires also included questions regarding pertinent demographic information about the respondents.

Two interviewers were selected and trained to conduct all interviews (except for a few conducted by the evaluator for additional insight). Both interviewers had extensive experience in conducting interviews. One of the interviewers was Hispanic, in order to include

Spanish-speaking parents in the sample of parents interviewed.

The interviewers spent two full days in each of the four Special Emphasis schools, interviewing all staff and a sample of parents. Each school staff interview lasted approximately 20 to 30 minutes; each parent interview lasted about 10 minutes. All responses were recorded in writing. The evaluator then tabulated and analyzed all the responses, looking for trends and patterns across the schools, as well as characteristics affected by the length of implementation.

Data Source

School Staff Respondents

A total of 164 school staff members were interviewed, including 104 regular classroom teachers, 29 certified specialists (music, art, physical education, resource, media, counselor), 27 classified staff (instructional, media, resource, physical education, community, and clerical aides), and four assistant principals, in addition to the four principals mentioned earlier. Because the principal interviews were not conducted in the same structured manner as the other staff interviews, the tabulation of responses will not include their answers. However, their perspective will be included throughout the descriptive remarks.

Generally, the profiles of personnel in the four schools are quite similar and will be combined for reporting purposes. One notable difference is in the number of staff members who worked in the school prior to the implementation of the Special Emphasis program. Only three staff members at Lozano and two at Shaw worked there before the Special Emphasis program, in contrast to 16 (33%) at Zavala and 12 (31%) at Coles. A possible explanation for this difference is that the two newest schools had a narrower pool of teachers from which to choose across the district, after the previous formation of the other two Special Emphasis

schools. In terms of staff who started to work at a Special Emphasis school after its inception, Lozano has nine (23%) such staff, compared to a nominal number at the other three schools. This is reasonable, considering the program at Lozano has been in effect the longest.

One other difference in the staff profiles is in the number of personnel who have worked only in their present school. Only one person (3%) at Shaw fits that description, whereas five (about 12%) at each of the other schools have worked only there. This is probably not an important difference.

On the surface, the two newest schools have many more teachers who are new to the district this past year than the other two schools. However, if one looks at those who were new to the district in the first year of implementation for the two older schools, the numbers are quite similar. In other words, it appears that about the same number of teachers (about 22%) in each school were new to the district at the start of the Special Emphasis program.

Half the staff members from across all four Special Emphasis schools have worked only in Corpus Christi I.S.D. The amount of time worked in this district and in any other districts was combined for each respondent to determine the total number of years of experience in education for the

staff members interviewed. The following table outlines this information:

Table 1

Years of Experience of Staff Interviewed

Total Years Experience	Number of Staff	Total Years Experience	Number of Staff
1 year	6	11-13 years	29
2 years	7	14-15 years	20
3 years	11	16-18 years	10
4-5 years	20	19-20 years	2
6-7 years	23	over 20 years	5
8-10 years	31		

The school staff respondents were also asked if they had always been in their present position. Fifty-five percent of those interviewed had served at some time in a different capacity. This group was comprised mostly of teachers who had taught at some time in a grade other than the one they were teaching in at the time of the interview.

Parent Respondents

A total of 21 parents were interviewed, with no fewer than four from any one school. Of these, 12 had one child attending a Special Emphasis School, five had two children attending, two had three children attending, one had five children attending, and one had children who had already graduated. All grade levels from prekindergarten through sixth grade were represented. Only five of the parents had had no experience with a school other than the Special Emphasis School. Fourteen of the parents had children who had attended the school prior to the implementation of the Special Emphasis program.

It should be noted that the selection of the parent sample was not random; the interviewers simply interviewed any parents available in the school on the days of the staff interviews. Therefore, these parents were those most involved with the school's activities. Although it might have been possible to obtain more varied responses from a larger, randomly-selected sample, this group was most knowledgeable about the workings of the schools. From previous experience with parent interviews, the evaluator expects that responses from a randomly-selected sample would have been heavily laden with "I don't know's," and not particularly cost-effective to collect.

Results

Very strong consistent patterns and trends emerged from the school staff responses, with relatively no important differences either among the four schools or among the various levels of personnel interviewed. A few differences appeared as a result of the length of implementation of the program, and these will be noted where appropriate. Otherwise, all the reported data have been combined across schools and across the different levels of personnel. Similarly consistent information was received from the parents, regardless of school or child's grade level.

All the responses to the various interview questions were tabulated and will be presented either in tables or in descriptive format in the text. Under major categories in the tables are examples of responses included in that category. The wording of each major category label is the most frequent response in that category. All responses are presented, even those mentioned only once which did not fit a category.

Some of the interview questions directly relate to a particular Special Emphasis component, while others were designed to cut across components. Those tables which refer to many components will be found in the Appendix; the tables

which refer to one specific component will be found in the text.

The results will be examined under two frameworks: (1) as they relate to each individual Special Emphasis component, and (2) as they relate to the overall picture of the Special Emphasis schools.

The Special Emphasis Components

Special Selection of Teachers and Staff. The information received from across all the interviews clearly indicates that this component is perceived as the most important. The tabulations of responses from several questions provide support for this finding.

In response to the question, "What do you think is the single most important contributing factor to the success of this school?" (see Table C-4 in the Appendix), more school staff respondents answered the "teachers and staff" than any other response. In addition, many more of the responses to this question relate to aspects of the staff: staff commitment, the principal/administration, team effort/unity, special selection of staff, staff competency, staff concern for students, and lack of jealousy among staff. When the number of responses to all of these staff-related characteristics are added, one finds that 61 percent of the responses attribute the most significant success factor to the staff.

When asked, "How does this school compare to other schools you've worked in?" (see Table C-1 in the Appendix), 44 percent of the responses refer to the staff: more staff unity, more staff dedication/commitment, more professional staff, and better principal/assistant principal.

When the parents were asked how this school compares to other schools (see Table D-1 in the Appendix), 22 percent of the responses referred to the teachers' paying individual attention to the children. In addition when asked what they like best about the school (see Table D-3 in Appendix), more of the parents mentioned the teacher than any other feature. And, 17 of the 21 parents reported that their children really like the teachers and staff (see Table D-2 in Appendix).

It should be noted that most of the respondents mentioned characteristics of the staff, and not the selection process per se, as significant to the success of the school. Of course, the principals felt that being able to select their own staff was a key factor in building an effective school. But it was the teachers and staff, and not the selection process, that dominated the perceptions of the school participants.

Additional Salary Increments for all Staff. Question 10 on the staff questionnaire ("Would you work in this school

if you didn't get a bonus to your salary?") was designed to get information regarding the perceived impact of this component. Out of all 164 respondents, only seven (about four percent) said they would not work at that school without a bonus. The reasons stated were that the distance to travel to the school was too far and that the working hours were too long. Two respondents said they did not know if they would. Twenty-five respondents (15 percent) said they would now, but that it was an incentive to apply at the beginning, they would not have come without it, and they think it is an important factor. Two respondents mentioned that they use the extra money to buy things for school. Two others mentioned that the stipends are important for self-esteem. The rest of the respondents (about 80 percent) simply said they would work there without a bonus.

Lower Pupil-Teacher Ratio. Question 14 on the staff questionnaire ("How is your job different with the lower pupil-teacher ratio?") was designed to assess the perceived impact of this component. Table 2 presents the tabulation of responses to this question for those teachers who have previously worked with a higher pupil-teacher ratio. Thirty-one respondents had never worked in a situation with a higher pupil-teacher ratio. One second-grade teacher said she has more students (25) than promised.

Table 2
Tabulation of Responses to Staff Question 14

How is your job different with the lower pupil-teacher ratio?

Response	Frequency*
More individualization/One-to-one	53
More small group teaching	20
Able to give attention to special needs (reteach, remediate)	18
Fewer students to divide my time ("Can only spread teacher so far, like peanut butter.")	18
It's better/easier/more manageable	17
Fewer discipline problems	13
Know students better (strengths, weaknesses, interests, can spot problems)	13
Not different	10
Better teacher-student interaction (better rapport)	10
Keep track of kids easier (easier record-keeping)	8
Better classroom environment (more floor space, more conducive to teaching skills)	4
Easier on psyche/Not as frustrating	4
Kids feel more special/important	3
Can give more feedback/positive reinforcement	3
More time to interact with parents	3
Reach all kids	3
Wider variety of activities	2
Hold attention better	2
Motivate better	1

*Each respondent may have mentioned more than one response.

As can be seen from the responses in Table 2, the overall result obtained from the lower pupil-teacher ratio is more time that the teacher can spend with each student, in a one-to-one situation and in small groups. Because of this, teachers feel that they can get to know each student better and provide instruction according to the students' needs. Only 10 of the respondents felt there was no difference as a result of the lower pupil-teacher ratio.

Highly Structured Reading/Language Arts Program (Open Court). The responses to several interview questions provide insight into the perceived impact of this component. Overall, it appears to be perceived as the second most important component, after the specially selected teachers and staff.

Support for this finding can be found in Table C-4 in the Appendix, which lists the participants' responses concerning the single most important factor contributing to the success of the school. Twenty-seven (12 percent) of the responses were "the reading program," which although a relatively small number, was second only to all the characteristics of the staff.

When asked, "What does this school do that your other school(s) didn't do (or do differently)?" (see Table C-2 in the Appendix), 70 of the respondents mentioned the reading program or some aspect of it.

Questions 13a, 13b, and 13c of the staff interview were all specifically designed to gather information regarding the participants' perceptions of this component. When asked, "How important do you think the reading program is to the success of the school," all but 15 respondents (about 91 percent) said, "Very important." The responses to this question are tabulated in Table 3.

Table 3
Tabulation of Responses to Staff Question 13a

How important do you think the reading program is to the success of the school?

Response	Frequency
Very important	149
The staff is important too	6
It's not the main factor	3
Sometimes comprehension is too high level	2
Vocabulary is too high level	1
Not as important in upper grades as in lower grades	1
Needs to be supplemented with media	1
Not all that important	1

Table 4 outlines the participants' perceptions of the most significant aspect of the reading program. The phonics approach was mentioned in 39 percent of the responses, with composition mentioned next in frequency (11 percent of the responses). The primary teachers were more likely to mention the phonics approach, while the upper level teachers were more likely to mention the composition cycle.

Table 5 presents the responses to the question, "Do you think you could get the same results with a different reading program?" This is one question which resulted in different responses according to the length of implementation of the program. The participants in the schools which are in the second and third year of program implementation were more likely to say, "Yes, if we used the same techniques of Open Court," while those in the schools in the first year of implementation were more likely to say they did not think they could get the same results with a different program.

Table 4
Tabulation of Responses to Staff Question 13b

What aspect of the reading program do you think is the most significant in its success?

Response	Frequency*
Phonics Approach (sound, blend, & decode)	87
Composition/sentence lifting	24
Wall cards/alphabet	17
Vocabulary build-up	16
Structure	15
Comprehension	10
Spelling	9
High interest level of stories	8
Multi-sensory approach	5
Foundation	3
Oral reading	3
Total program	3
Positive note/attitude toward reading	3
Teacher involvement	2
Experientially-based	2
Whole-group instruction	2
Proofreading	2
Detailed program	2
Recall and memorization	1
Pacing	1
Spiraling effect	1
Language skills component	1
Montessori methods	1
Application of skills to student needs	1
Motivates kids	1
High expectations	1
It picks the students up wherever they are	1
Lot of listening	1

*Each respondent may have mentioned more than one response.

Table 5
Tabulation of Responses to Staff Question 13c

Do you think you could get the same results with a different reading program?

No/Don't think so: 78

Yes/Yes, but...: 53

Don't know: 33

Comment	Frequency*
Would need to use same techniques of Open Court	15
Children learn to read and write faster than in other programs	10
Get transfer to other subjects through Open Court	6
If same staff	4
Would be harder/Not as good	4
If teacher-directed/whole group instruction	4
If whole school works together	3
Depends on type of success you want - Open Court is strong phonics, weak in internalizing and interpreting information	3
Not with these kids	3
Positive reinforcement important	3
If strong phonics	3
Decoding easier for LEP students	2
Could not take just part; whole program important	2
Repetition important	2
Not with any used in this district (but Economy series good)	2
If highly structured	2
Kids feel successful with this	2
Better than some programs, but not "do or die" Open Court	1
Basals are too dull	1
Good program but lacks skill development, comprehension, sequencing, finding main idea	1
It covers so many more areas	1
Constant teacher-student interaction	1

*Not all respondents made a comment

Responses to three other questions offer additional information about the reading program. Table C-5 in the Appendix outlines changes suggested by the school staff members interviewed, with changes in the reading program mentioned more often than any other changes. The principals and others interviewed mentioned the fact that the staff members make a great deal of additional materials to supplement the program in its weak areas.

Several comments regarding the reading program were made in response to the last question on the staff interview, "Do you have anything to add?" Four respondents suggested that the district use Open Court in all the schools, four said they are "totally sold" on Open Court, three said how exciting it is to see the children reading independently, three others made positive comments, and one said the language program needs a lot of improvement.

The parents were questioned about changes in their children's reading habits (see Table D-4 in the Appendix). The responses indicated that the children enjoy reading and participate voluntarily in activities involving reading.

Intensive Inservice Training Program. Question 12 on the school staff interview was designed to assess the perceived impact of this component. Table 6 presents the examples mentioned by respondents as useful during the staff

development sessions. The overwhelming response was that the Open Court consultants provided the most useful information. Over half the responses referred to learning about some aspect of the Open Court program.

Table 6

Examples of Staff Development Activities Perceived as Useful

Response	Frequency*
Open Court/Modeling	64
All useful	21
Math manipulatives	15
Ways to improve program (Open Court)	13
Long-range goals/planning	10
Open Court story mapping	7
Workshop on composition	7
Essential Elements	6
Set up rooms	5
Classroom management/Discipline	5
Open Court consultants' visit during year	4
Motivational techniques	4
Student placement	3
Sharing ideas	3
Meeting with parents	3
Visiting other Special Emphasis Schools	2
Getting to know each other	2
Getting familiar with materials/texts	2
Stress management	2
Coordination with other grade levels	2
Creative thinking and problem solving	1
Right brain/Left brain	1

*Each respondent may have mentioned more than one example.

Table 7 presents the examples mentioned by respondents as activities not useful during staff development. Less than a third of the respondents mentioned that something was not useful, with most referring to activities which did not apply to their specific area.

Table 7

Examples of Staff Development Activities Perceived as Not Useful

Response	Frequency*
Things that did not apply to my area (specialists)	11
Some speakers other than Open Court	8
Motivational techniques	7
Essential Elements	5
A lot was common sense/repetitious/ we could have read ourselves	5
Too much at beginning/overpowering/ better if followed up later	4
Some was inappropriate for grade level; better if primary and upper split into groups	3
Stress management	2
Need more on Open Court	2
Needed math at beginning	1
Phonics details	1
Proper questioning for reading	1
Math workshop	1
Computer inservice	1
Resource teacher had to wait for teachers to make groups	1

*Each respondent may have mentioned more than one example, or none.

Additional Staff Specialists and Support Personnel. Question 15 on the staff questionnaire was designed to assess the perceived impact of this component. Respondents were asked what they thought were the most important functions filled by the additional staff specialists and support personnel. The results were examined in two ways: (1) by function, and (2) by staff member who fulfills the function.

The function mentioned most frequently (85 times) was that of reinforcement of skills, providing individual attention to students who need it, as in preteaching and reteaching when necessary. The media specialists were mentioned most often (33 times) as filling this function, and the instructional aides were mentioned almost as frequently (26 times) in this capacity. Twenty respondents mentioned this function without specifying a particular staff member.

The instructional aides were the support staff mentioned most often (90 times), first with regard to providing reinforcement, and second with regard to preparing materials, running off dittos, grading papers, and other clerical assistance. They were also mentioned as helping with small group instruction and helping provide special assistance to those students with learning problems as well

as to late enrollees.

Many teachers mentioned the importance of having professionals with special expertise provide music, art, and physical education. The fine arts teachers were also mentioned with regard to providing enrichment, motivation, and a creative outlet that the students would not otherwise have. Several respondents voiced disappointment that music and art are not available to the youngest children.

Without specifying particular functions, many respondents mentioned the importance of having a full-time counselor. They felt that it was great for the students to have someone with whom to discuss problems; one respondent said the counselor was "almost a surrogate parent."

The community aide was also frequently mentioned in a generally positive way. In particular, the service provided by this person was perceived as saving the teachers time in following up absences.

All staff specialists and support personnel (media, music, art, P.E., and resource teachers, counselor, assistant principal, aides, nurse, and office staff) received some positive mention. Except for a very small number of ambivalent comments regarding the value of the media specialists, the overwhelming feeling of the respondents was that having the additional support helps to

ensure that all the needs of the students are met. Some respondents mentioned the fact that, as a result of the additional staff, the children are exposed to more diverse teaching styles. In addition, many respondents noted that the teacher's job was facilitated greatly, giving teachers more time to spend with the students. One third-grade teacher said, "What would I do without them?" A second-grade teacher said "It's like having two teachers for each class."

One other question in the staff interview provided information about the perceived impact of this component. Responses to Question 5b ("What does this school do that your other school(s) didn't do?"), as outlined in Table C-2 in the Appendix, mentioned the additional support staff second only to the reading program.

Additional Supplies and Materials. Question 17 on the staff questionnaire ("How important are the extra teaching supplies you receive? Give an example.") was designed to gather information about the perceived impact of this component. Table 8 presents the tabulation of responses to this question.

Table 8
Tabulation of Responses to Staff Question #17

How important are the extra teaching supplies you receive? Give examples.

Response	Frequency*
Use for workshop kits, games, manipulatives, reinforcement materials, sound cards, additional Open Court materials	43
We get what we need/have ample	17
Use for paper, paste, markers, stickers, construction paper	12
Allows teacher more time for instruction; makes teaching easier, more effective	10
Couldn't carry out program without it	9
Would end up having to use own money; now don't have to	8
Kids like it; plenty to go around for everyone	6
Not aware of it/Don't receive	5
We need more equipment (PE) and supplies (media)	5
Workbooks	5
Transparencies, thermals, dittos	5
Use to meet essential elements, other content areas	4
We can be more creative	4
Positive reinforcers for kids	3
We can plan ahead without worry	3
Consummables	2
Can use more wisely, now that we know program	1
Only get half of what ordered	1
All K teachers chose different things and share	1
All 6th grade teachers pooled resources	1
Supplies rationed; we're told what to buy	1
Use for low-achieving group	1
Use for computer	1
Takes long time to get	1
Enriches program	1
They're not a big factor	1
Independent study materials	1
Up-to-date materials	1
Visual aids	1
A-V materials	1
Parenting kit	1

*Each respondent may have mentioned more than one response.

Generally, the teachers used the extra money to buy materials and manipulatives to help reinforce the reading/language arts program. Except for a very small number of negative or neutral comments, the teachers felt they were able to get everything they needed quickly and easily. Overall, the teachers felt that their ability to provide effective instruction was enhanced by this component.

Additional Clerical Assistance. Question 16 in the staff interview ("What kind of assistance do you get with record-keeping?") was designed to assess the perceived impact of this component.

Despite the fact that several documents about the Special Emphasis schools list this component as a nonmonetary incentive of the program, only 44 teachers (42 percent) mentioned receiving any assistance with record-keeping. Thirteen said they receive some help from the instructional aide, seven said the assistance from the attendance clerk was important, and a few mentioned some help from the secretary and office clerk. Overall, the teachers felt they received very little or no assistance at all. This was generally no different from their previous situation, before working in a Special Emphasis school.

Additional Released Time for In-District Professional Growth. Question 18 on the staff questionnaire was designed to gather information about this component. The teachers were asked if they had been able to participate in additional professional growth courses through this program.

As with the previous component, even though this feature is included in descriptions about the Special Emphasis program, few teachers seemed to be aware of it or to have benefitted from it. Specifically, only 14 teachers (about 13 percent) said they had taken advantage of this opportunity. Most were surprised by the question. Two said the program itself has been professional growth.

Parent Involvement Program. Several questions in both the staff and parent interviews provided information regarding the perceived impact of this component.

In response to question 5b of the staff interview ("What exactly does this school do that your other school didn't do?"--see Table C-2 in the Appendix), strong parent involvement was mentioned fourth in frequency out of 11 responses, and accounted for about 10 percent of the total responses. In response to the question which asked what demands the program places on their position (see Table C-3 in the Appendix), 12 respondents mentioned the additional

interaction with parents, accounting for about five percent of all the responses. And when asked what is the most important factor contributing to the success of the program (see Table C-4 in the Appendix), seven respondents mentioned parent participation. Although these numbers are relatively small, one must realize that the parent involvement program would not be expected to be among the most frequent responses to these questions. The fact that it is acknowledged by staff to this extent implies that there is indeed a healthy amount of parent involvement occurring in these schools.

Several questions in the parent interview also provide information about this component. When asked what they like best about the school (see Table D-3 in the Appendix), six parents mentioned the parent program, accounting for about 21 percent of the responses. When asked how this school compares to other schools (see Table D-1 in the Appendix), six parents mentioned the parent program, accounting for about 12 percent of the responses.

Questions 9 and 10 in the parent interview were designed to gather information regarding the type and frequency of interactions that the parents have with various school staff. Most interact daily with the principal or assistant principal, about what tasks need to be accomplished as part of their volunteer help in the school.

They also interact quite frequently with their child's teacher about the progress of their child.

Overall, the parents reported feeling welcome in the school and appreciated and needed by the staff. Of course, one must remember that the parents interviewed were those most active in the school activities.

The Unnamed Component: The Principal and Assistant Principal. Although it is not stated in any of the documents which describe the Special Emphasis schools, there is one additional component detected by the evaluator which merits exposure. In all four Special Emphasis schools included in this study, the principal and assistant principal are described as an extremely important part of the success of the schools. Evidence for this conclusion can be found in the responses to several interview questions.

When asked how this school compares to others, (see Table C-1 in the Appendix), about 13 percent of the respondents included the principal/assistant principal as part of their answer. When asked what is the most important factor contributing to the success of the school (see Table C-4 in the Appendix), the support from the principal and assistant principal accounted for about 10 percent of the responses, being next in frequency just after the staff and the reading program. And when the parents were asked what

they like best about the school (see Table D-3 in the Appendix), three mentioned the fact that the principal makes them feel comfortable in the school.

A very important aspect of this component is the quality and quantity of communication which seems to take place between the principal/assistant principal and staff. Questions 6 and 7 in the staff interview ("Who do you interact with the most, how often, and about what?") were designed to assess the lines of communication which occur in these schools. Most teachers reported that they interact most often with the other teachers at their grade level (daily planning meetings), and next most often with the principal and assistant principal. The principal and assistant principal were described as helping with grouping, pacing, scheduling, and monitoring progress. The assistant principal was also reported as helping with discipline and curriculum problems. In one school, the principal and assistant were described as "highly visible people," who "want to know what's going on." In short, the principal and assistant principal provide instructional leadership and administrative support to their school staff members.

The Overall Picture

The respondents in the interview process described many instruction-related features of the Special Emphasis schools

which are not attributable to just one component, but rather, are behaviors and phenomena related to combinations of the components working together. In addition, the respondents described intangible qualities of the staff, students, and parents which are clearly an important part of the success of the school, but cannot be "implemented" or acquired as were the individual Special Emphasis components. It is interesting to note that all these features of the school as a whole, both those that are observable behaviors and those that are more intangible, closely match the characteristics typically described in the effective schooling literature (Purkey & Smith, 1983).

Instruction-Related Features of the Special Emphasis Schools. The respondents across all four schools reported many observable behaviors related to instruction and learning which clearly contribute to the effectiveness of the schools. Although not attributable to any single component, these factors are a function of several of the components in interaction and must be described in order to provide a fuller understanding of the school as a whole. These behaviors and phenomena may be classified into four groups: (1) school or building level, (2) teacher or classroom level, (3) student behaviors, and (4) parent behaviors.

At the level of the building or school, one feature often mentioned was the use of grouping practices which meet the individual instructional needs of the student. The Special Emphasis schools use a combination of whole-group instruction, small group instruction, and individualized one-to-one tutoring. A correlate of the grouping practices is more and better student-teacher interaction, resulting in the teachers having a better understanding of the needs of each student and better rapport with each student.

Another aspect of the schools which emerged throughout the staff interviews, and particularly from responses to questions 6 and 7 regarding the interactions of the staff, is that a great deal of coordination, planning, and communication is constantly occurring among all staff. The teachers meet daily to plan within their grade level, to share ideas and materials, to discuss strategies for meeting particular students' needs, and to generally provide moral support. The classroom teachers meet often with the staff specialists and support personnel to coordinate the reinforcement instruction and other necessary activities. In addition, the respondents report some coordination across grade levels to enhance the transition, particularly at the primary grades. The frequent interactions with the principal and assistant principal have been discussed earlier. This coordination among the staff is made

purposeful and effective by other features of the schools also mentioned in the interviews: the common set of explicitly-stated goals, the consistency in the program, and the highly organized nature of the school.

Additional building-level features of the Special Emphasis schools which should be mentioned include a consistent discipline program, close monitoring of students' progress, more rewards and positive reinforcement given to students for excellence, and a strong emphasis on basic skills.

Respondents also described instruction-related features which occur at the classroom or teacher level. They include high time-on-task, appropriate instructional feedback to students, and preteaching and reteaching occurring when necessary.

In addition, the staff were described as being more dedicated and committed than most, in that they work longer hours, are better prepared, and are willing to work under greater pressure (as reported in Table C-3 in the Appendix). They are also described as being more professional and wanting to be held accountable, (see Table C-6 in the Appendix). The parents report that the teachers ask more of the students and motivate them more (see Table D-1 in the Appendix).

The students are described as behaving differently since the inception of the Special Emphasis program. As reported in Table D-4 in the Appendix, the students like to read more, to go to the library more, and to read signs and labels in the environment. In addition, the parents report that their children study more, do their homework, are interested in school activities, are doing better academically, and want to go to school (even when sick).

The parents also demonstrate behaviors which enhance the effectiveness of the school. Many are at the school on a daily or regular basis to help make materials and provide other support as needed. They also interact a great deal with their children's teachers and are therefore constantly aware of their children's progress. Several staff members, when asked if they had anything to add at the end of the interview, said that the parents are taking responsibility for the education of their children.

Intangible Features of the Special Emphasis Schools. Beyond these concrete instruction-related behaviors and phenomena that have been observed and are potentially attributable to a combination of the Special Emphasis components, there are other schoolwide features described by the respondents that are more intangible. These are qualities of the school, staff, students, and parents that are emotional in nature and affect how the people feel about

themselves, about the school, about their peers, and about the other participants, and in turn influence the interpersonal behaviors of the participants. Whether reported by the teachers, other staff, or parents, the statements are overwhelmingly positive. All participants seem to feel that these are special schools, staffed by special professionals, serving a special clientele. These feelings of specialness and the resulting warm and caring interpersonal interactions do not easily fit into a discussion of the program components. They exemplify the phenomenon of the "total being greater than the sum of its parts." In this regard, they may be the most important results of all.

This set of results is best illustrated by the most frequent response given to the question, "How does this school compare to other schools you've worked in?" (see Table C-1 in the Appendix). The response given more than any other was "a more positive atmosphere." The respondents described the schools as warm, friendly, happy places, characterized by an enthusiasm and school spirit, and where the teachers care more and are warmer to the students. In addition to having a positive atmosphere, the schools were described (see Table C-2 in the Appendix) as being "student-oriented." A lot of attention is given to each child and a lot of personal concern is shown toward the students.

The teachers and staff described themselves as being "like a family." The strong staff unity and team effort were referred to again and again (see Tables C-1 and C-4 in the Appendix). They clearly work well together, are cooperative, share ideas and materials, and are mutually supportive. There also seems to be very little jealousy or competition among staff members.

Another feature frequently mentioned was high expectations. These expectations are both for excellence in teaching and for student learning and achievement. The teachers and the students feel that more is asked of them and more is expected of them.

The teachers reported that they feel special to have been chosen to work in the Special Emphasis school. In response to the last question in the interview ("Do you have anything to add?"), more teachers said, "I feel fortunate to be part of this school" than any other response by far. Other responses to this question include:

"I look forward to coming to school everyday."

"In 15 years of my professional life, this has been my happiest."

"I've never been in a program so fulfilling or seen so much success."

"I've enjoyed the challenge and find it rewarding."

The parents also perceived the teachers and staff to be special. When asked what they like best about the school (Table D-3 in the Appendix), the parents named the teachers first. They said the teachers show love and patience to the students and help them like to learn. They also reported that the teachers take extra time with the students and show a personal interest in them (see Table D-1 in the Appendix).

The parents reported that their children are happy and feel special because of the school. When asked what their child says about the school (see Table D-2 in the Appendix), the parents responded that the children really like the school, are proud of it, and are more motivated. They also reported that the children demonstrate better interpersonal behaviors (see Table D-4 in Appendix): they are better behaved, have better manners, communicate better, and get along better with other children. One sixth-grade teacher, in the additional comments at the end of the interview, said this was the first time she had ever had a class with no discipline problems.

The parents described their own feelings about the school as well. They feel welcome in the school and comfortable with the teachers, staff, and administrators. They also report feeling that their help is needed and appreciated by those in the school.

Discussion and Conclusions

The most important finding of this study is that the respondents from all four Special Emphasis schools described the same behaviors, feelings, and phenomena occurring in all four sites as a result of the implementation of the unique Special Emphasis components. In addition, these strong, consistent trends and patterns that emerged from the interview data closely match the characteristics described in the effective schooling literature. In the effective schooling studies, the researchers typically identified schools serving disadvantaged students whose test scores far exceeded what was expected for students of that socioeconomic status and closely examined all aspects of the school to discover what made them special.

A list of these effectiveness characteristics taken from any of the studies (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1984) would describe what has been found in each of Corpus Christi's Special Emphasis schools: instruction is guided by a preplanned curriculum, there are high expectations for student learning, learning progress is closely monitored, instructional groups fit instructional needs, personal interactions between teachers and students are positive, there is strong instructional leadership, the

curriculum is based on clear goals and objectives, school time is used for learning, discipline is firm and consistent, incentives and rewards are used to motivate students and staff, and parents are invited to become involved.

What this line of effectiveness research lacks, however, is a description of the process of change and strategies for change. What has been demonstrated by the Special Emphasis schools is that it is not only possible to change an ordinary school into an effective school, it is possible to replicate this phenomenon at least four times. This replication was made possible by the use of resources to implement the components outlined earlier: to specially select a staff and pay an extra incentive bonus, to mandate the use of a highly structured reading/language arts program and provide staff training tied to the program, to hire a principal and assistant principal who have a strong instructional background, to lower the pupil-teacher ratio and add extra staff specialists and support personnel, to provide additional supplies and materials, and to encourage a strong parent involvement program.

But it is clear from the overall description of the schools, as presented in the latter part of the results, that more has occurred in the Special Emphasis schools than just the implementation of individual components. Something

greater than the sum of the parts has been created and replicated. This phenomenon may be compared to what occurs in a nuclear reaction: when a critical mass of elements is brought together, a reaction is produced which results in the creation of something new, something that unleashes energy. This creation of energy is quite analogous to the intangible qualities found in the staff, students, and parents of the Special Emphasis schools--the feelings of positiveness and specialness that cannot be directly attributed to any or all of the components.

What we do not know is what critical mass of the components is necessary to produce this phenomenon. Because all four schools have been built on the same set of components, it is impossible at this time to ascertain whether all components are essential or whether some combination or subset of components would be sufficient critical mass to produce the same effects.

The interview data certainly point to some aspects of the schools as more important than others. For example, the quality of the staff is mentioned more often than anything else as a key factor in the success of the schools. But one cannot conclude that the special selection of the staff alone guaranteed the characteristics described: the dedication to work long hours under a good deal of pressure, the high energy to constantly be interacting and on task, or

the willingness to work in a cooperative and mutually supportive manner with everyone else in the school. The distinct impression is that these teachers are better in this setting and with this program than they were in their previous assignments. If this impression is correct, then the principals obtained more than the group of individual teachers they selected, and might have obtained similar performance from other teachers under the same circumstances. Similarly, one might not only carefully select competent staff, but also pay them well and provide training, supplies, and good instructional materials, and still not have a staff marked by the exceptional qualities described in the interviews. Nevertheless, four different schools, with four different school staffs, all report similar qualities. Perhaps the newness of the staff as a group (as in a group of college freshmen), or the mission set forth, had as much to do with the resulting energy as did the selection process itself. Given current information, there is no way to know for certain.

Another good example is the use of the Open Court Reading Program. Some of the effectiveness characteristics described, such as instructional grouping to meet instructional needs, explicity stated and commonly-shared goals, and the use of a preplanned curriculum, are a function of the schoolwide use of this program. But one

could argue that the flexibility to provide a combination of whole-group instruction, small group instruction, and individualization is as dependent on the lower pupil-teacher ratio and on the additional staff specialists and support staff as it is on the well-structured reading program. And certainly the commonly-shared and explicit goals, and the consistent preplanned curriculum, are also obtainable with other highly structured reading programs when implemented schoolwide and backed by a principal and assistant principal who are instructional leaders. In addition, the reading program would likely be less effective if the staff development were not tied to the program and if all the extra manipulatives and materials were not available to the teachers.

These examples illustrate the difficulty in attributing the success of the Special Emphasis schools to any specific set of components. Though the perceived impact of some components is clearly stronger than that of others, the components and their effects are too interconnected to differentiate among them. Yet, it is quite possible that these effects could be obtained with the implementation of a smaller number of components, and therefore also for less expenditure of funds. Although present information does not allow us to assess the relative independent contribution of each component, it would be short-sighted to assume that all

components must be included in future implementation efforts. Given the fact that resources are always limited, and that the goal must be to spread these effects to as many schools as possible, it would be worthwhile to test out subsets of components or reasonable variations of the implementation model.

This strategy of exploring the effects of different program versions was first employed on a large-scale basis in the planned variation model of Project Follow-Through (Abt Associates, 1976). The concept behind this model is that, rather than implementing one single program in many different sites, one implements several versions of that program, in order to explore the effects of different "variations on a theme." Employing this type of strategy gives decision-makers a great deal of information regarding which combinations of different elements produce the desired effects. Using the information gained from such exploration, decision-makers can then implement the most cost-effective program across multiple sites.

In the case of the Special Emphasis program, the planned variation model appears to be an appropriate strategy for future implementation efforts. The results of this study describe the desired effects of a successful program and can be used as the test of whether a given planned variation is effective or not. Because test scores

as an index of success are extremely stable and change rather slowly, decision-makers will have much richer criteria on which to decide if the positive changes that are sought are actually occurring. If the participants describe the same type of feelings, behaviors, and phenomena that were described in this study, then that planned variation is producing the effectiveness characteristics of success.

There are obviously many different planned variations of the Special Emphasis components that could be explored. It is not within the scope of this work to outline all possible and reasonable combinations. However, a few suggestions will be presented for illustrative purposes. One which appears to have potential is to implement all components except for the special selection of staff. Because this component would be impossible to implement on a districtwide or even large-scale basis, it would be interesting to discover whether the desired effects are obtainable if all other components were implemented into a school with the staff intact.

Other variations are possible by experimenting with the reading program component. One version of the model to explore is to implement just the Open Court Reading Program, coupled with the appropriate staff development and instructional materials, into a school with other factors held constant. A different approach would be to select

another highly structured but less costly reading/language arts program that is characterized by the same features (strong phonics approach, the use of whole-group and small-group instruction, the incorporation of preteaching and reteaching activities, etc.) and implement this program with all the other Special Emphasis components included.

The main purpose of conducting such planned explorations of the Special Emphasis model would be to discover the least expensive way that the district can meet the instructional needs of as many schools and students as possible. Given the results of this study, program developers and implementors now have a full picture of what an effective school looks like and how it operates. Not only that, this phenomenon has been replicated four times, and sustained over three years in one site, indicating that it is neither a chance event nor attributable to merely a "halo effect." In an idealistic world with unlimited resources and unlimited staff from which to continually select the best, decision-makers would have an easy task: to implement the Special Emphasis program in every school that is achieving below expectations. Given the realities of our world, however, decision-makers have the more difficult challenge to discover either new sources of revenue or more cost-effective versions of the program. For, the question is no longer how can we provide quality instruction and

achievement for minority and poverty-level students in a neighborhood setting, but rather, how can we meet this obligation for all such students in the district.

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APPENDIX A

School Staff Interview Questions

Corpus Christi ISD
Special Emphasis Schools Study

School Staff Interview

School _____

Position _____

Interviewer _____

1. How long have you worked in this school? _____

2. How long have you worked in this district? _____

3. Have you worked in another district or districts before this? _____

   If so, for how long? _____

4. Were you in the same staff position before working in this school? _____

   If not, what position(s) did you serve in? _____

   _____

5a. How does this school compare to other schools you've worked in? _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

5b. What exactly does this school do that the other school(s) didn't do? (or do differently) _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

5c. What demands does this program place on your position?

_____

_____

_____

_____

6a. Of all the other people who work in this school, who do you interact with the most often? _____

_____

6b. How often? _____

6c. What do you interact about? _____

_____

_____

_____

7. Who else in the school do you meet with often?

_____

Please describe the interaction(s)_____

_____

_____

_____

8. What do you think is the single most important contributing factor to the success of this school?

_____

_____

9. If you could change anything in the running of this program, what would it be? _____

_____

_____

10. Would you work in this school if you didn't get a bonus to your salary? _____

11. Do you plan to work here next year? _____

If not, why not? _____

_____

12.* You get several extra days of staff development as part of the program. Give me an example of what you do in those days and how it relates to your success in the program. _____

_____

_____

_____

13a. How important do you think the reading program is to the success of the school? _____

_____

_____

_____

13b. What aspect of the reading program do you think is the most significant in its success? _____

_____

_____

13c. Do you think you could get the same results with a different reading program? _____

_____

14.* Have you worked in a situation with a higher pupil-teacher ratio than here? _____

If so, how is your job different with the lower ratios?

_____

_____

15. In your opinion, what are the most important functions that the additional staff specialists and support personnel fill? _____

_____

_____

_____

16.* What kind of assistance do you get with record-keeping?

_____

How does this compare to your situation prior to working in this school? _____

_____

_____

17.* How important are the extra teaching supplies that you receive? Give example. _____

_____

_____

18.* Have you been able to participate in additional professional growth courses through this program? Give example. _____

_____

19. Being a part of a Special Emphasis school makes everyone feel particularly accountable. How has this affected you? _____

_____

20. Is there anything else you'd like to add? _____

_____

_____

* Not asked of all staff.

APPENDIX B

Parent Interview Questions

Corpus Christi ISD
Special Emphasis Schools Study

Parent Interview

School _____

Interviewer_____

1. How many children do you have who attend this school?
_____

2. What grade(s) is/are your child(ren) in? _____

3. How long has/have your child(ren) attended this school?
_____

4. Has/have your child(ren) attended other schools in this district? _____

   If so, for how long? _____

5. Do you have any other children who attend a different school right now? _____

   If so, how many and what grade levels? _____

   _____

6a. How does this school compare to the other schools your child(ren) has/have attended? _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

6b. What exactly does this school do that the other school(s) didn't do? (or do differently?)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

7a. What does/do your child(ren) say about this school?

_____

_____

_____

7b. Does/do your child(ren) say anything about anyone who works here or about any of the activities? Please describe.

_____

_____

_____

8a. Has/have your child(ren) changed in any way since he/she they has/have been attending this school? _____

If so, how has/have he/she/they changed? _____

_____

_____

_____

8b. Have your child(ren)'s reading habits changed since he/she has been attending this school? _____

If so, how? _____

_____

8c. Has your child changed any other habits? _____

If so, describe. _____

_____

8d. Did your child attend this school before the special emphasis program was implemented? _____

If so, did your child change at all after the new program started? (Describe)

_____

_____

9a. Of all the people who work in this school, who do you talk with the most? _____

9b. How often? _____

9c. What do you usually talk about with this person? _____

_____

10. Is there anyone else who works in this school that you've talked with this year? _____

If so, who, and about how often? _____

_____

_____

11. What do you like best about this school? _____

_____

_____

12. Is there anything you would like to change in this school?

What would it be? _____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX C

Responses to Selected Questions in School Staff Interview

Table C-1
Tabulation of Responses to Staff Question 5a

How does this school compare to other schools you've worked in?

Response	Frequency*
Atmosphere More Positive - more enthusiastic/school spirit - more conducive to learning - teachers more warm to students/ care more - friendlier/happier/more relaxed environment	50
More Staff Unity - share ideas and materials - we're like a family - strong team effort/cohesiveness - work well together (toward common goal) - cooperation/mutually supportive	40
More Staff Dedication/Commitment - all work hard, overtime, long hours - all motivated/want to be here - determined to make program work - conscientious, devoted - no lazy teachers, everyone tries hard - more effort to get best from students	34
Better/Best School - "Cadillac of schools" - fantastic/great	29
Better Principal/Assistant Principal - feel more comfortable with them - supportive/motivating/driving force - instructional leadership - good communication/open	22
Staff More Professional - higher competency - specially selected staff - they study and prepare for program - pride in school and work	17
More Resources - materials, supplies - access to what needed - physical renovations - support staff	17
Better Organization/Structured - "works like well-oiled machine"	12
Not Different/Same	11
Higher Expectations - for student learning - for teachers to be dynamic	9
Students More Motivated - feel better about themselves - love to come to school - feel special	6
More Challenging - more rewarding	6
More Work/Paperwork - more pressure	5
More Flexibility (to do so much)	1

*Each respondent may have mentioned more than one response.

Table C-2
Tabulation of Responses to Staff Question 5b

What exactly does this school do that the other school(s) didn't do (or do differently)?

Response	Frequency*
Intensive Reading/Language Arts Program	70
- emphasis on basic skills	
- structured, fast paced	
- phonics approach	
- reinforcement for poor readers	
- good for special education	
- direct instruction/teacher-directed	
- more explanation	
- teacher-student interaction	
- use concept of mastery learning	
- monitor progress	
Additional Support Staff	32
- full-time counselor important	
- use of paraprofessionals	
- special enrichment available to students	
- support system provides reinforcement	
- grouping more flexible	
Student-Oriented	22
- emphasis on kids	
- more attention to individual child	
- lot of positive reinforcement	
- rewards/praise	
- motivate kids	
- personal concern for kids	
- more one-to-one	
Strong Parent Involvement	21
- parental support	
- home visits	
- PTA raises money	
- all staff try to talk with parents more	
Consistent Discipline Program (4 mentioned discipline as problem)	16
Planning	12
- lot of coordination among staff	
- share information about students, curriculum, materials	
- everyone together takes child from one point to the next	
- good transition across grades	
- consistency/follow through	
Set Goals	10
- uniform goals	
- higher expectations	
- specific/"I know what is expected of me"	
Smaller Class Size	9
Grouping	5
- to meet student needs	
High Time-on Task	2
More Classroom Observation	2

*Each respondent may have mentioned more than one response.

Table C-3
Tabulation of Responses to Staff Question 5c

What demands does this program place on your position?

Response	Frequency*
Time Consuming	82
- lot of outside preparation, planning	
- extra work at home	
- paperwork	
Energy Needed	31
- keep up "hot teaching"	
- be "up" all the time/on your toes	
- mental and physical alertness	
- 300% effort/hustle	
- pacing	
- always being on task	
Pressure	25
- a lot is expected of us	
- meeting goals and objectives	
- greater emphasis placed on success	
- pressure on ourselves	
- competition with other Special Emphasis Schools	
- worry about student achievement	
- expected to produce more	
- to do the best possible	
- everyone else is working so hard, you can't stray	
Learn the Reading Program	21
- particularly at the beginning	
- demands a lot of knowledge	
Make Materials	17
Work Harder	14
- workload is three times as heavy	
- must be dedicated	
- must be organized	
- must be more careful in instructional methods	
More Interaction with Parents & Students	12
- more conferences	
- more activities	
- more one-to-one	
- be child-oriented	
- must individualize	
None	10
- no more than I place on myself	
More Observation/Visitors	5
More Coordination with other Staff	4
To Always Be Positive	3
To Be Creative/Have Good Ideas	2
Demands on Support Staff	2
- too many students in P.E.	
- resource room is "dumping ground" for low achievers	

*Each respondent may have mentioned more than one response.

Table C-4
Tabulation of Responses to Staff Question 8

What do you think is the single most important contributing factor to the success of this school?

Response	Frequency*
Teachers/Staff	37
Staff Commitment	30
Reading Program	27
Principal/Administration (support)	23
Team Effort/Unity	23
Positive Attitude/Enthusiasm	22
Special Selection of Staff	11
Staff Competency	8
Parent Participation	7
Common Goal Orientation	6
Staff Concern for Students	4
Discipline	4
High Expectations	3
Individual Attention to Students	3
Structure/Consistency	3
Whole-group Instruction	2
Resources	2
Student Motivation	2
Emphasis on Basics	1
Special Training of Staff	1
Being on Task	1
Lack of Jealousy among Staff	1
Class Size	1
Communication among Staff	1

*Each respondent may have mentioned more than one response.

Table C-5
Tabulation of Responses to Staff Question 9

If you could change anything in the running of this program, what would it be?

Response	Frequency*
Nothing/Don't Know	45
Improve Reading/Language Arts Program	29
- language component needs improvement	
- wall cards are confusing	
- use same alphabet for primary and upper	
- reading misleveled/too much social studies	
- need follow-up skills/skills development	
- need more drills/grammar	
- need more in comprehension than recall of facts, like drawing conclusions, inferences	
- need stronger spelling	
- more games to go with reading program	
- more enrichment for top students	
- more explicit pacing	
- better grouping for new students/ bilingual students	
- introduce reading in kindergarten	
Time Needs	23
- more time in language arts, math	
- more whole-group time, less workshop time	
- time schedule too structured/structure time differently	
- more time for teacher preparation	
- more time to get adjusted	
- more reading time	
- more time at beginning of year	
- more time for social/cultural experiences/ field trips	
- more time for reinforcement (resource)	
- more time to process books and materials (media)	
Less Pressure about Achievement Scores	11
More Resources	10
- more money for library/fine arts	
- more instructional aides	
- more resource staff	
- more aides/less paperwork	
Changes in Fine Arts	8
- need music/art for lower grades	
- more opportunity for musical performances	
- longer art classes	
- fine arts is wasted time (1 response)	

TABLE C-5 (continued)

Better Training - more specific to area (of specialists) - more training, particularly Open Court - training on composition	6
Changes in P.E. - more P.E. staff - need gym - longer P.E. periods - include with academic subjects - eliminate P.E. (1 response)	6
More Community Involvement	4
Stronger Discipline - better classroom management - less traffic in halls	4
Changes in Media - better definition of media job tasks - media for kindergarten - longer media periods	3
Better Communication - between principal and teachers - all staff should meet every 3-4 months - about scheduling, budgeting time	3
Lower Student-Teacher Ratio	3
Control High Turnover of Students	3
Changes in Math - add Open Court math to district program - need Montessori math in kindergarten	2
Change Physical Layout of Building	2
Have Prep Period for CAT	1
Cafeteria More Relaxed	1
Allow Open Enrollment (for any students in district)	1
Have Earlier Student Placement	1
Have 1 Classroom at each Grade Level Purely Open Court	1
Teacher should have Low Group for only One Year	1

*Each respondent may have mentioned more than one response.

Table C-6
Tabulation of Responses to Staff Question #19

Being a part of a Special Emphasis School makes everyone feel particularly accountable. How has this affected you?

Response	Frequency*
No Pressure - I like to be held accountable - I always feel accountable - not different from before - always competitve with self to do best	62
More Pressure - I feel more accountable - must do best at all times - accountable for everything I do - pressure both from self and from outside	32
Good Pressure/Motivator - keeps me on toes - expands my knowledge - makes me better teacher - I work well under pressure	22
Too Much Emphasis on Scores	11
Higher Expectations	9
Feel Professional and Special (chosen) - "gives me a special confidence in my teaching abilities"	7
Nervous, Tense, Worried about Doing Program Right	7
Outsiders Looking at Us	6
Work Harder than Ever Before	6
Having Whole School Pull Together Helps - "keeps us all honest" - everyone is accountable	6
More Pressure from H.B.72 - "we had the pressure earlier, now whole state does"	5
Have to Monitor/Document Work - more aware of need to be skill-oriented	5
Make Every Moment Count	2
Competitive with other Special Emphasis Schools	2
Competition among Staff	2
Easy to be Accountable	1
Less Pressure on Media than Classroom Teacher	1
Tension among Staff	1
No Competition among Staff	1
No one cares about Resource Kids (They don't take tests)	1
Pressure Even to Reach Resource Kids	1
Pressure Sometimes Goes Overboard	1
Makes you more Serious about what you do	1
Pressure to Discipline	1
"My home life suffers" (no time with own kids)	1
"I sometimes feel responsible if a student hasn't mastered a skill" (instructional aide)	1

*Each respondent may have mentioned more than one response.

Table C-7
Tabulation of Responses to Staff Question #20

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Specific Individual Suggestions:

1. District should use Open Court or a highly structured reading program throughout (mentioned 4 times).
2. K teacher needs assistance with paperwork, because she starts folders.
3. Art teacher needs larger facility, smaller classload, more storage room.
4. The office should print the forms needed for Open Court.
5. Need Open Court follow-up after school starts to correct mistakes, on Saturdays.
6. Attendance clerk needs more gas money.
7. Need more than $100 for supplies, for laminating and duplicating paper.
8. Need more modeling of Open Court lessons.
9. If the record-keeping procedure were uniform district-wide, there would be less redundancy and it would be easier on the teacher.

*Other Comments	Frequency
I feel fortunate to be a part.	30
Positive comments about Open Court.	10
More relaxed in second year.	9
Positive attitude important.	8
Principals do good job.	7
Special for kids-they're happy.	6
Should be more Special Emphasis schools.	5
Small teacher-student ratio important.	3
Support system good.	3
Quality of staff important.	2
I've enjoyed the challenge.	2
My ideal school and teaching job.	1
Too much pressure to bring positive view to media.	1
Not enough individual praise for teachers.	1
It feels good for a teacher to know that someone out there cares if kids are progressing.	1
Staff dedication well beyond any I've ever seen.	1
Negative comment about Open Court	1
I'm glad my own kids attend (teacher).	1

*Some comments are incorporated into the text and are not repeated here.

APPENDIX D

Responses to Selected Questions in Parent Interview

Table D-1
Tabulation of Responses to Parent Question 6*

How does this school compare to the other school(s) your child(ren) has/have attended? What exactly does this school do that the other school(s) didn't do (or do differently)?

Response	Frequency**
More individual attention to kids	11
- teacher takes personal interest	
- teachers help students more	
- teachers work harder with kids	
- teachers take time with kids	
- more teacher-student interaction	
- kids feel like teachers want to help	
Teach more/better	11
- more advanced/learning more	
- vocabulary & reading skills by end of first grade	
- better teaching aids	
- teaching to read more than before	
- more detailed explanations to kids	
- makes education meaningful for the kids	
Teachers ask more of kids	7
- tremendous difference in amount my child is asked to learn and do	
- my child works harder	
- more homework	
- teachers motivate kids to do their best	
- won't let kids just "get by"	
More parent involvement	6
- easier to talk to teachers	
- great parent involvement program	
- teachers appreciate our help	
- teachers come to parents when there is problem with child	
Excellent school/staff	3
- there are more teachers	
Bilingual program/Hispanic focus	2
- we participate more because of it	
Don't know/Wasn't active at other school	2
- other school too far away	
More discipline	1
Open Court reading program	1
Kids have better chance here	1
I like neighborhood school (vs. bussing)	1
Last year, school was below par; now it compares with any school	1
Kids have more pride--don't write on walls, litter, or destroy materials	1
They are the same	1
I don't know, but my child is learning. I can't read or write, and I'm real excited by my son's progress	1
More positive/rewards for kids	1

*Because the answers overlapped, the responses to questions 6a and 6b have been combined.

**Each respondent may have mentioned more than one response to each question.

Table D-2

Tabulation of Responses to Parent Question 7*

What does your child say about this school, about anyone who works here, or about any of the activities?

Response	Frequency**
Likes school/Loves school - proud of school; wants to keep it clean - enjoys learning - really into school/enthusiastic	20
Likes teacher(s) - always talking about teachers and others at school - teachers pay attention when he talks to them and they try to help - wants to take presents to teacher - they look up to the teachers, the teachers care - teachers are strict, but kids like them	17
Kids want to come to school, even if sick	6
Likes principal	4
Likes coach - works them hard, but they enjoy	2
Was scared/had problems at first; now likes it	2
Doesn't want to move; wants to stay here	2
Likes the kids	1
Likes all activities	1
P.E. teacher pushes too much--to behave and not play	1
Likes tutorial program after school	1
Likes to be rewarded	1
At beginning, always wanted to go to school, now tired and wants to stay home	1
They love it, especially the one who was bussed--they know the difference. Made F's at other schook, A-B honor roll here.	1

*Because the answers ovelapped, the responses to questions 7a and 7b have been combined.

**Each respondent may have mentioned more than one response to each question.

Table D-3

Tabulation of Responses to Parent Question #11

What do you like best about this school?

Response	Frequency*
The teachers - they care/are friendly - they work hard - they show love and patience to the kids - they help the children like to learn	7
The parent program - we feel welcome	6
The instructional program	3
The principal - makes us feel comfortable	3
The kids like it	2
Good manners are taught to the kids	2
Neighborhood school--it's close	2
Positive attitude	1
Small class size	1
Relationship between staff and students	1

*Each respondent may have mentioned more than one response.

Table D-4
Tabulation of Responses to Parent Question 8*

What changes have occurred in your child(ren) since attending this school?

The following responses are from the 14 parents whose children attended the school before it was a Special Emphasis school:

Response	Frequency**
Likes to read much more now - reads everything (labels, signs) - tries to read above his level - Open Court really kicked him off into reading - goes to library to get books - younger (K) child reads to Mom a lot more than older one did at that age - older child reads to younger one	15
Likes to study/to go to school - didn't like to study before, now really into school - does all homework - more responsible for work - wants to achieve the most - wasn't interested; now very interested (6th grader) - now involved in school and its activities - easier to get up to go to school - now does homework; before would only watch TV or play outside	13
Better behaved/better manners - helps Mom at home more	3
Doing much better academically (had problems before) - report cards have changed	3
More careful when talks - communicates better	2
No changes	2
Had trouble before with reading & teachers - now don't get into trouble	2
Better attitude toward school	1
Likes to help kids at lower level	1
Child (3rd grader) thinks it's harder, but it's just they expect more	1
Child really came out of shell; teachers care	1
Child is learning faster--in 3 months what used to take 6 months	1

The following responses are from the 7 parents whose children have attended only this school; two are prekindergarten and five are kindergarten:

Response	Frequency
Enjoys reading & being read to - wants to go to library - likes to read signs	5
Learned a lot since beginning of year	3
Gets along better with other children/shares	3
Used to throw temper tantrums, now polite, good student	1
Memorizes poems and recites them at night	1
Improved vocabulary, learning addition	1
More attentive	1

*Because of overlapping answers, reponses from questions 8a, 8b, 8c, and 8d have been combined.

**Each respondent may have mentioned more than one response to each question.

Table D-5
Tabulation of Responses to Parent Question 12

Is there anything you'd like to change in this school?

Response	Frequency
Change nothing	15
Don't know	3
Physically larger classrooms	1
New desks	1
Add covers from portables to main building (so that little ones don't have to walk in rain)	1